Robot

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device that it needs a prescription filled. The computer brains of the device tells a robotic arm to go to a particular container using a code that corresponds to that container. It tells the robotic arm how long it should wait at the container to collect the prescribed amount and the number of pills to be dropped into the pill bottle being held by the electronic arm.

When the bottle is filled with the prescribed amount, the robotic arm places the bottle on a conveyer belt leading to a check-point outside the "mainframe." Upon inspection, the bottle is uncapped so the pharmacist can check the content of the bottle against what the computer prescribed. If the results match, the pharmacist caps bottle and prepares it for customer pick-up.

Since the machine is so new, Pharmacist Creighton Maynard said a few adjustments have been needed, like realigning the robotic arm so the pills don't miss the bottle and fall to the floor.

Less technical is the way the waiting line is organized to receive help in the pharmacy. A guide rope has been stretched the length of the pharmacy's help/cashier counter to organize the wait. At one point last Friday, there were 10 people standing back to front along the rope. One woman left at the sight of the line, but it moves quickly — at a pace of about one person every two minutes.

Behind the help counter, there are several other working counters inside the pharmacy. There's a counter used to fill prescriptions for customers waiting in the store and another counter run by a technician who fills overnight prescriptions. A drive-thru allows people to pick-up and drop-off without getting out of their cars.

There are also consulting desks to the left of the help counter. According to Maynard, pharmacists will use the area to educate customers about certain drugs while accessing their needs. The aim of the set-up is to encourage more pharmacist/customer interaction and is one of the platforms of what Maynard calls "Disease State Management."

Today, according to Maynard, it is sometimes hard to spend a few minutes with a customer — especially in a busy pharmacy.

With the addition of new staff, streamlining processes and creating visibility, store personnel hope to spend more time with customers. They will also improve on the efficiency of all processes in the store, according to Maynard.